

CIA OSI IM/75-4 INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM QADHAFI'S NUCLEAR

WEAPONS AIMS

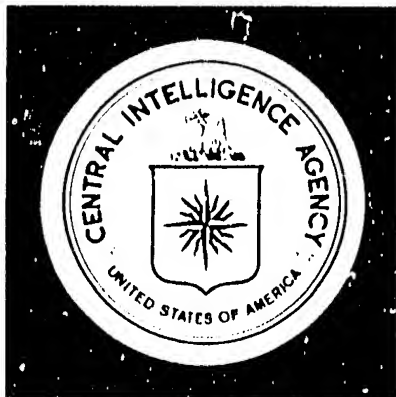
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# Intelligence Memorandum

## *Qadhafi's Nuclear Weapons Aims*

**Secret**

OSI-IM/75-4  
May 1975

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## Intelligence Memorandum

# QADHAFI'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS AIMS

*Project Officers*



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OSI-IM/75-4

May 1975

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
DIRECTORATE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
OFFICE OF SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE

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## QADHAFI'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS AIMS

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### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

X1C The acquisition of nuclear weapons was a stated objective of Colonel Mu'ammarr Qadhafi of Libya in 1974 and so far he has chosen the path of developing an indigenous program to achieve this aim.

a more realistic time table would be 8 years. Even the longer period is overly optimistic, since Libya does not have a scientific base upon which a nuclear weapon program can be built.

X1C [REDACTED] Qadhafi is attempting to negotiate with various Western companies for nearly simultaneous construction of the necessary nuclear facilities. The "shotgun" approach to obtain a wide variety of services and facilities indicates that Libya has opted for a crash nuclear program. Such an approach neither assures success nor necessarily shortens the time to produce a nuclear weapon. In view of the inherent difficulties in constructing and operating the com-

plex nuclear facilities as well as the shortage of scientific manpower, it will probably take at least a decade for Libya to produce a nuclear weapon.

Qadhafi sees himself as having a special role to play in restoring Muslim orthodoxy to the Arab world and has been consistent in expressing his aim to eliminate the State of Israel. [REDACTED]

he might be motivated to attempt the theft of nuclear weapons or materials, perhaps through terrorist groups with which he has close relations. In the past Qadhafi has not been entirely free to act on his own and some of his more extreme policy proposals have been moderated by the Revolutionary Command Council. There is no evidence that the Council opposes Qadhafi on the matter of nuclear weaponry, however. Moreover, during the past year he has been operating in an increasingly independent fashion.

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### DISCUSSION

X1C The chairman of the Libyan Revolutionary Command Council, Col. Mu'ammarr Qadhafi, stated in 1974 that Libya must acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup>

[REDACTED] Qadhafi has attempted unsuccessfully to purchase a nuclear

weapon. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In December 1974 the Libyans announced that they planned to purchase a nuclear research center with a two-megawatt reactor and two nuclear power stations of 200 MW each which would provide electric power for general use and for desalination plants.<sup>8</sup>

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Since mid-1974 Libya has been negotiating with the US and various European countries to obtain the necessary facilities to achieve a nuclear weapons capability. The speed with which the Libyans are attempting to negotiate contracts for a wide variety of nuclear facilities simultaneously indicates that, at this time, they have opted for an accelerated program rather than for an orderly, step-by-step progression of the nuclear fuel cycle for a power or a weapons program. Qadhafi seems to be going out in all directions in his attempts to obtain most of the facilities at the same time. 25X1C

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Libya is attempting to obtain a number of nuclear facilities for nuclear research, the production of nuclear power, desalination, and the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons. Since early 1974, the Libyans have been trying to obtain a license approval from the USAEC to purchase a US General Atomics TRIGA research reactor [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Interest in nuclear power dates back to early 1972 when Qadhafi approved plans for a nuclear powered desalination plant jointly with Egypt. The joint project seems to have lost momentum temporarily since the planned union with Egypt did not materialize. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Although no agreements have been reached, it is expected that they would include IAEA nuclear materials safeguards. [REDACTED]

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Libya has initiated a domestic uranium exploration effort.<sup>17</sup> [REDACTED]

Also Libyans have shown an interest in obtaining uranium from neighboring Niger.<sup>19</sup>

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Libya does not have an immediate scientific base upon which a nuclear program can be built and has few nuclear scientists or engineers. Qadhafi has some qualified advisors, but many are technically untrained. His extensive attempts to recruit Muslim Arab scientists in the West<sup>20</sup> and his offers of high salaries apparently have been successful in recruiting some technically trained personnel. In order to man future Libyan nuclear facilities a few students were sent to Pakistan<sup>22</sup> and 128 students were sent to the United States early in 1975 for 5 years of training in nuclear energy.<sup>21</sup>

Should Libya be successful in negotiating contracts for the simultaneous construction of the necessary nuclear facilities for an independent nuclear program, and assuming the most optimistic and ideal conditions, the time needed for actual

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construction, start-up, debugging, meshing operations for continuous flow, and obtaining sufficient nuclear materials product is estimated to be at least 7 to 9 years. Simultaneously, Libya must solve her scientific manpower deficiency. After obtaining the necessary nuclear materials, their fabrication into even a crude device would add another year or so. Such a program if successful would result in a Libyan nuclear capability in 8 to 10 years. It is believed, however, that the Libyans cannot manage a program of this magnitude, succeed immediately in solving all problems, and produce a nuclear weapon for at least a decade.

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The Libyans may be attempting to shorten the time for acquiring a nuclear weapon by leap-frogging some of the normal developmental steps. They may attempt to buy into the Pakistani nuclear energy program—the most advanced nuclear program in the Moslem world—which conceivably could save them a couple of years.

Qadhafi clearly has a commitment to acquire a nuclear weapon capability.

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Qadhafi has used Libyan Governmental facilities and personally supported, directly and indirectly, several terrorist group activities.<sup>26,27</sup> Qadhafi is not so unaware of the attendant risks, however, as to get involved in such an undertaking impulsively; rather, it would be as the result of careful planning. Once having acquired a weapon, Qadhafi's reputation is such that his acquisition of the weapon would of itself greatly add to tensions in the Middle East. Moreover, he would be certain to use the weapon as an implied threat in order to gain political leverage. Finally, should his goals be sufficiently frustrated, there would be a real danger of his feeling impelled to use the weapon—perhaps through a terrorist group. In the past Qadhafi has not been entirely free to act on his own and some of his more extreme policy proposals have been moderated by the Revolutionary Command Council. There is no evidence that the Council opposes Qadhafi on the matter of nuclear weaponry, however. Moreover, during the past year he has been operating in an increasingly independent fashion.

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## REFERENCES

The source references supporting this paper are identified in a list published separately. Copies of the list are available to authorized personnel and may be obtained from the originating office through regular channels. Requests for the list of references should include the publication number and date of this report.